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ABSTRACT

A study of French "wh" questions, particularly questions using "que" and "quoi," looks at conventional syntactic explanations and presents a new analysis. Relevant facts and pertinent claims about these questions are reviewed, the researcher's assumptions about the working of Wh questions are explained, the new analysis is presented, and theoretical implications are discussed. It is concluded that French questions possess a number of peculiarities that have major implications for understanding Wh movement and how it is motivated within current syntactic theory. A number of revisions to one theory are made to bring it into line with Chomskian theory that checking is a one-way mechanism, helping to explain in part the restrictions on "que" questions widely discussed in the literature on French syntax. A further constraint on the position of "que" is proposed, accounting for the impossibility of "quoi" subject questions. This analysis is seen as supporting, not invalidating, the Minimal Approach. Contains 30 references. (MSE)

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SITUATING *QUE*•

Bernadette Plunkett

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SITUATING *QUE**

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The correct analysis of questions in French is of considerable theoretical interest and much discussion has been devoted to them in the literature on French syntax. One particularly intractable subset of these are 'what' questions. There are various restrictions on these types of questions which, though easy enough to describe are difficult to explain from a theoretical perspective. Of the numerous researchers who have worked on this area (including Obenauer 1976, Goldsmith 1978, Hirschbühler 1978, Koopman 1982, Friedemann 1991, Plunkett 1994) two (Friedemann and Koopman) have explicitly argued that part of the paradigm can be taken to show that certain question phrases are required to undergo Wh Movement into the C projection in the overt syntax of French, even though in other cases such movement can be left until LF. We will see that this is perhaps true, but I will argue that the obligatory movement in such cases can be attributed to independent factors and cannot be taken as proof of a general ban on *in situ* wh-subjects.

In this paper I will redraw the lines around the problematic paradigm and present a new analysis of it. I will then go on to discuss the theoretical implications of the proposed approach.

I begin, in Section 1, by reviewing the relevant facts and summarising the pertinent claims about *que* and *quoi* questions. In

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Section 2 I lay out my assumptions about the working of Wh Questions in general and in Section 3 I present the analysis. Section 4, in which the theoretical implications are discussed, concludes the paper.

1. French Questions: Some Restrictions on 'What'

French 'what' questions are special in several respects. Though the final account will link these peculiarities, for the time being I will treat them as separate issues, reviewing each of the restrictions in turn.

1.1 What is 'what'?

Generally speaking, surface Wh Movement is optional in direct questions in French. Wh-words may either move to the front of the sentence or stay *in situ*. A straightforward example of this can be seen in (1).

(1) a. Qui aimes tu?
who love you
'Who do you love?'
b. T(u) aimes qui?

The (b) case here can, but need not be, interpreted as an echo question. The same variability can be seen in the long-distance questions in (2).

(2) a. Qui as tu dit que tu aimes?
who have you said that you love
'Who did you say you loved?'
b. T(u) as dit que t(u) aimes qui?

In fact the two forms may belong to different registers but for most speakers both are possible.[1]

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[1] Further variability is involved when questions with full noun phrase subjects occur since different types of inversion are available after movement, or indeed no inversion at all. As far as I can tell nothing I have to say about 'what' questions impinges on an adequate account of these different types and I will abstract away from these issues in what follows.

As can be seen, in the case of 'who' questions, the wh-word takes the same form in moved and *in situ* questions. This is not the case in 'what' questions, as (3) shows.

(3) a. Que cherchez vous?
what seek you
What are you looking for?'
b. Vous cherchez quoi?

Not only are there two forms for the word 'what' but they are in complementary distribution, as can be seen in (4).

(4) a. * Vous cherchez que?
You seek what
b. * Quoi cherchez vous?
what seek you

This fact leads to the suggestion, adopted by most researchers in the area, that they are variants of the same morpheme (but see Obenauer 1976, 1977 for a different view). On this view the two forms of the word for 'what' may be seen as a weak unstressed form *que* and a tonic form *quoi*. This view is supported by the fact that the variants are similar to those found in other weak-strong pronominal pairs such as *te ~ toi, me ~ moi, se ~ soi*. It is further supported by the fact that, just as with those pairs, only the strong form appears inside PPs:

(5) a. Vous pensez à quoi?
you think to what
'What are you thinking about?'
b. A quoi pensez vous?
c. * Vous pensez à que?
d. * A que pensez vous?

In addition, for most speakers *que* cannot be co-ordinated with another wh-word. Thus (6a) and (6b) are parallel to (6d) where the co-ordination of weak subject pronouns is ruled out, while (6c) is perfect.

(6) a. ?? Qui ou que voulez-vous photographier?
who or what want you to photograph
'Who or what do you want to photograph?'
b. * Que ou qui voulez-vous photographier?
c. Qui ou quoi voulez-vous photographier?
d. * Tu et il voulez photographier quelqu'un.
'You and he want to photograph someone.'

The treatment of *que* as a weak form of *quoi* then is well-supported, but as we will see below the precise characterisation of 'weak' pronouns is somewhat problematic.

The alternative view of the alternation in (3) is the one put forward by Obenauer in which *que* in fronted questions is treated as the finite complementiser *que* while *quoi* is treated as a genuine wh-word. This treatment parallels that of Kayne (1976) and others for the *que* which appears in relative clauses. However, while accepting Kayne's analysis for relative *que*, both Goldsmith (1978) and Hirschbühler (1978) review and argue in detail against Obenauer's view of interrogative *que*. Their arguments are convincing; for example, as Goldsmith (1978, 1981) points out, simple inversion of a verb and a pronominal subject is blocked by the presence of an overt complementiser, not only in embedded clauses in French but in matrix clauses too in the cases where a complementiser may appear in them.

(7) a. Peut-être qu'il est parti.
perhaps that he is left
'Perhaps he has left.'
b.* Peut-être qu'est-il parti.
perhaps that is he left
c. Peut-être est-il parti.
perhaps is-he left

Since this type of inversion does take place in interrogatives, as we have seen in (1-3), the *que* there cannot be a complementiser unless just in this case the verb is allowed to raise to C and adjoin to the right of the overt complementiser. If this were to happen then clearly the *que* complementiser in (3) and the *que* complementiser in (7) would have to

be differentiated from one another. In fact, to the extent that *que* must always appear immediately before the inflected verb and any clitics it may have attached to it, as claimed by Obenauer (1977), all *que* questions containing pronominal subjects will involve simple inversion.[2] Since inversion is typically taken to indicate that the verb is in C, which is borne out by the contrast in (7), it is fairly safe to assume that when *que* appears it is always outside IP.

It would seem then that the two views on the status of interrogative *que* are incompatible. However, within current syntactic analyses couched in the Principles and Parameters framework they can be seen to have something in common. Complementisers and pronouns are both treated as functional heads which may have syntactic complements but do not assign theta roles and hence cannot take arguments. Since this is the case, some aspects of the behaviour of *que* may be attributed to its status as a functional head and are thus compatible with its treatment as a pronoun in the current framework in a way which was not possible in earlier approaches.

1.2 Subject questions

Further and yet more problematic constraints on 'what' arise in that in simple direct questions if it functions as the subject it appears neither to be possible to extract it, nor (if we take *quoi* to be the form used when it has not been moved) to be able to stay *in situ*.

(8) * Que flotte dans l'eau?
what floats in the water
'What floats in water?' or 'What is floating in the water?'

(9) * Quoi flotte dans l'eau?
what floats in the water

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2 Apparent exceptions to this generalisation, like (i), where complex inversion has taken place, are rejected by Obenauer (1977) as marginal but uniformally accepted by my informants.

(i) Que cela veut-il dire?
what that wants it to say
'What does that mean?'

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This is not true for other wh-phrases as (10) shows.

(10) Qui flotte dans l'eau?
who floats in the water
'Who is floating/floats in the water?'

The restriction on extraction is not seen in more complex questions like (11), which I take (*pace* Obenauer 1976) to be cases of long-distance extraction given the standard *que ~ qui* alternation which shows up after extraction of an embedded subject.[3]

(11) Qu'est ce qui flotte dans l'eau?
what is this that floats in water
'What (is it that) floats/is floating in (the) water?'

These cases completely parallel other cases of long-distance subject-*que* extraction such as (12).

(12) Que crains-tu qui soit advenu?
what fear-you that is taken place
'What do you fear has happened?'

Whether the restriction on *quoi* in [Spec,IP] extends to embedded contexts is harder to determine. The impossibility of cases like (13) suggests that it does.

(13) * Tu pensais que quoi trainait dans le couloir?
you thought that what lay around in the corridor
'What did you think was lying around in the corridor?'

However, an example given to me by Paul Hirschbühler shows that where movement is independently blocked, 'what' may perhaps stay in subject position.

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3 In contexts where *that*-t effects would show up in English a *que* complementiser becomes *qui*; the effect is dubbed 'masquerade' by Kayne (1976) and is considered by Rizzi (1989) to be a case of agreement in Comp, with the C showing the presence of a wh-trace in its specifier.

(14) Qui a dit que quoi trainait où?
who has said that what lay around where
'Who said what was lying around where?'

This suggests that the ban on *quoi* in subject position is not merely due to its incompatibility with nominative Case, as Goldsmith (1981) claims.[4] In Plunkett (1994) this explanation for the absence of *que/quoi* subject questions was adopted and it was argued that stressed subject pronouns such as the ones in the echo questions in (15) noted by Koopman (1982) be taken to be non-nominative forms.[5]

(15) a. QUOI a été décidé?
what has been decided
'WHAT was decided?'
b. QUOI flotte dans l'eau?
what floats in the water
'WHAT floats in water?'

Another set of examples which might be problematic for Goldsmith's view are those like (16) where, under most views, the expletive subject would transmit nominative Case to *quoi* in post-verbal position.

(16) Il est arrivé quoi?
it is happened what
'What happened?'

These arise both with unaccusative type verbs such as those which occur in English *There*-Insertion constructions and, in French in passives, as in

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4 Though that approach has the advantage of being able to explain why many speakers only marginally accept *quoi* in subject positions in echo questions and others reject it altogether.

5 It was felt that the contrast in (6) supported that view.

(17) Il a été décidé quoi pour demain?
it has been decided what for tomorrow
'What has been decided for tomorrow?'

These types of construction provide additional information about the constraints on the extraction of 'what' since, when [Spec,IP] is filled with an expletive, the post-verbal nominative *que* can be extracted as (18) and (19) show.

(18) Qu'est-il arrivé?
what is it happened
'What happened?'

(19) Qu'a-t-il été décidé pour demain?
what has it been decided for tomorrow
'What has been decided for tomorrow?'

This possibility might lead us to wonder whether the cases of apparent long-distance subject *que* movement in (12) were not in fact instances of extraction from a post-verbal position, since native speakers often have difficulty in deciding which of the examples in (20) is the appropriate way of writing the corresponding spoken question.

(20) a. Que dis-tu qui est advenu?
what say you that is happened
'What do you say happened?'
b. Que dis-tu qu'il est advenu?
what say you that it is happened

However, there are clear cases where no expletive subject is possible, as in (21) and long distance subject extraction is indeed still licit.

(21) Que prétendais-tu qui motivait cette analyse?
what claimed you that motivated that analysis
'What did you claim motivated that analysis?'

One might wonder whether any further information could be gleaned from looking at indirect subject questions. Unfortunately, this is not possible. 'What' questions in this context are in fact anomalous, but in this case, as the paradigm in (22) shows, there is no difference between subject questions and object ones; when the embedded clause is tensed, neither permits a simple question introduced by *que*. Instead, these indirect 'what' questions are always introduced by the pronoun *ce* ('it'), resulting in a free-relative type structure.

(22) a. * Je me demande que/quoi tu aimes.
I myself ask what you like
b. Je me demande ce que tu aimes.
I myself ask it that you like
'I wonder what you like'
c. * Je me demande qui/quoi lui fait peur.
I myself ask what him makes frightened
d. Je me demande ce qui lui fait peur.
I myself ask it that him makes frightened
'I wonder what makes him frightened.'

This restriction is specific to indirect 'what' questions, since the instances of (23) are unexceptional.

(23) a. Je me demande qui tu aimes.
I myself ask who you like
'I wonder who you like.'
b. Je me demande qui lui fait peur.
I myself ask who him makes frightened
'I wonder who makes him frightened.'

The restriction could be linked to the dependence of *que* on an adjacent verb but it can have nothing to do with the status of subject questions. In fact, in the questions in (22b) and (d) *que* is clearly the relative complementiser as Kayne (1976) argued was the case in all relatives, since where the subject has been extracted we find the *qui* alternant though the head of the relative is inanimate.

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Where the wh-clause is non-finite the facts are different again but since in these cases there can never be an overt subject they cannot be relevant with regards to the restriction on subject questions.[6] Since it is that restriction which I will now concentrate on, in what follows I will abstract away from indirect questions.

1.3 Review

We have seen that *que/quoi* questions are special in several ways. First, 'what' has two forms in French, one appearing to be a weak or clitic pronoun which undergoes movement and the second a strong pronoun which appears when the *in situ* strategy for Wh Questions is used. Second, in matrix direct questions *que* cannot appear bearing the grammatical function of subject, suggesting in by now traditional terms that 'extraction' of 'what' subjects is impossible in French. However, coincidentally *quoi* may not appear as an *in situ* matrix subject either and it is unclear how closely these facts should be related to the availability of two forms for the 'what' pronoun.

In the next section I will be discussing one approach to Wh Movement with a view to seeing whether it can shed any light on these peculiarities.

2. Wh Movement

Rizzi (1991), reformulating the approach taken in May (1985), proposed that Wh Movement could be accounted for by the Wh Criterion as given in (24).

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6 In infinitivals (as discussed in Hirschbühler 1978) we find the only case where *que* and *quoi* are not in complete complementary distribution. An embedded case is illustrated in (i).

(i)a. Je ne sais quoi faire
I not know what to do

b. Je ne sais que faire
I not know what to do
'I don't know what to do'

Hirschbühler argues that subtle semantic factors distinguish these two.

(24) **Wh Criterion**

a. A Wh-operator must be in a Spec-head configuration with an X^0_{+WH}

b. An X^0_{+WH} must be in a Spec-head configuration with a Wh-operator

(Rizzi 1991: 2)

In Plunkett (1993) a similar, if somewhat less strict, approach is taken with regard to questions where the principle in (25) is essentially comparable to clause (b) of the Wh Criterion.[7]

(25) **Interrogative Movement Principle** (IMP)
The specifier of a head which bears question features must bear matching features.

(Plunkett 1993: 262)

Although the two approaches diverge in detail, they converge in the proposal that wh-features are marked on C in selected embedded wh-clauses but on the head which is normally immediately below C in root clauses; we also agree that the principle applies at S-structure in English. Rizzi assumes that in root clauses wh-features are associated with the head containing tense features whereas I located them in Agr; these details seem to be irrelevant to the analysis of the French data and for the sake of simplicity I will illustrate with a unified Infl assuming this to contain both Tns and Agr features.

The complementarity between inversion in root and embedded clauses in English questions has led to the now standard analysis of [Spec,CP] as the landing site for Wh Movement. Although both approaches situate wh-features lower than C in root clauses, the claim that [Spec,CP] is the usual landing site for Wh Movement is not

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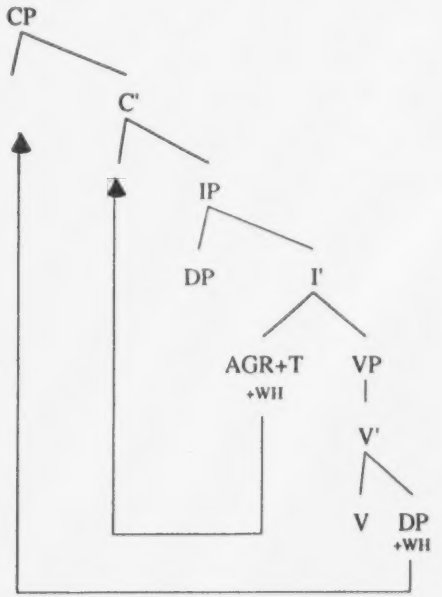
[7] Clause (a) in (24) was originally intended to deal with non-inverting structures such as relative clauses and will not be of relevance until Section 3. In the meantime I will refer only to the IMP in (25) with the understanding that in nearly all cases, (24b) and (25) have the same coverage.

disputed. Both approaches employ the same mechanism to explain why a wh-phrase usually ends up in [Spec,CP] in English; the subject occupies [Spec,IP] so that the principle in (25) usually cannot be satisfied by S-structure unless I moves into C, whose specifier is empty; the wh-phrase can then move into the specifier position, permitting spec-head agreement in the C projection with respect to wh-features. A typical pre-Wh Movement structure would be the one shown in (26), where arrows show the subsequent movement.

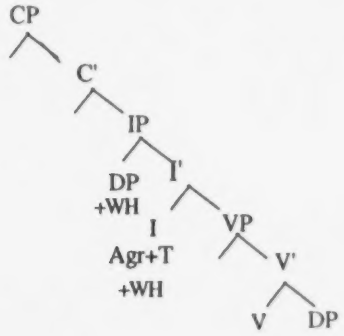
(26)



The Infl node and the subject NP do not agree in wh-features; if, however, both the object NP and the head marked +wh, move into the C projection then the IMP will be satisfied. The same type of situation will arise when an adjunct phrase or an argument in a lower clause is marked +wh.

There is one type of construction, however, where the approaches differ more substantially; this is the configuration in which the root subject is marked +wh, as in (27).

(27)



In a configuration such as the one in (27), IMP is immediately satisfied. I assume the now familiar Lexical Clause Hypothesis with subjects in French and English raising to [Spec,IP] to get Case; the subject and Infl agree in wh-features here and there is no obvious motivation for further movement of either the wh-phrase or the wh-marked head. Since this is so, considerations of economy would lead us to expect that no further movement of the wh-phrase will be required either in the syntax or at LF; indeed, I will argue not only that further movement is unnecessary but that once IMP has been satisfied, it is impossible. In so far as this approach requires the minimum number of steps it is the *Minimal Approach* to Wh Movement and will be referred to as such in what follows. Rizzi (1991) acknowledges that to say that no further movement takes place in such cases is the most straightforward account of root subject questions in English. The analysis correctly predicts that we will see no evidence of Subject Auxiliary Inversion in such questions, this being a movement which is triggered to allow satisfaction of the IMP. While the absence of inversion in such questions is an effect which people have previously struggled to explain, it is a natural consequence of the Minimal Approach.

However, Rizzi (1991) does not adopt the Minimal Approach. One of his reasons is that part of the data from French questions, discussed in the previous section, can be taken to indicate that subject wh-phrases must vacate [Spec,IP]. As mentioned in the introduction, this was the conclusion reached on different grounds by both Koopman (1982) and Friedemann (1991). In the following section I will discuss the analysis of French questions with respect to the type of approach outlined, first in general and then with respect to the specific restrictions on 'what' questions. As far as subject questions are concerned I will focus on how the Minimal Approach can cope with the French data.

3. The Minimal Approach to French Questions

An adequate approach to Wh Movement must be able to account for when any wh-phrase must, may or may not move. In addition, it should correctly predict in which cases of Wh Movement a concomitant inversion must or may take place. In particular, leaving aside factors specific to subject questions for the moment, with respect to French it must explain:

(i) why (overt) Wh Movement is optional in matrix questions and obligatory in embedded questions;

(ii) why inversion is possible but not obligatory with most matrix (moved) questions but impossible in embedded questions;[8]

(iii) why, in obligatory contexts, only one wh-phrase has to move;

(iv) why inversion never happens when a wh-phrase stays *in situ*;

(v) why partial Wh Movement is not possible (eg. movement to an intermediate [Spec,CP]).

In addition, with respect to 'what' questions, our theory must explain:

(vi) why inversion is obligatory in matrix *que* questions.

Rizzi (1991) deals with the first five of these. I will begin my analysis by looking in detail at these factors and propose some modifications to his treatment. Next, I will turn to the treatment of 'what' questions specifically and finally, I will discuss subject questions

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8 Stylistic Inversion is sometimes found in embedded contexts and is thus an exception to this generalisation. A full investigation of the differences in different types of inversion is beyond the scope of this paper.

in general and argue that we should ensure that the approach is 'minimal'.

3.1 Optional inversion and optional movement

As we saw above, the IMP in (25) has the same effect as clause (b) of the Wh Criterion (24) which was designed to deal with inversion constructions. Let us first examine how the inversion data is explained and then proceed to look briefly at non-inversion in French questions and whether clause (a) of (24) or an equivalent is also necessary.

If the head of every question clause bears wh-features and, if (24)/(25) applies at S-structure in French (as Rizzi (1991) claims), then Wh Movement should be obligatory, as it is in English. This is a correct prediction for indirect questions in French, where the matrix verb selects a CP whose head is marked +wh, but since matrix Wh Movement is optional Rizzi proposes that while matrix I may bear wh-features, such features are not *necessarily* generated. He points to the optionality of the question marker *ka* in Japanese matrix questions in support of this claim.[9] This proposal that wh-features are generated freely, which largely accounts for factor (i), seems reasonable and I will assume in what follows that in a direct question where no wh-phrase moves, the head of the matrix clause is -wh. The question now arises whether obligatory Wh Movement indicates that all question clauses must obligatorily have +wh heads in English. It would seem rather *ad hoc* to assume that wh-features are freely generated in French but obligatorily generated in certain contexts in English. However, another of his proposals allows Rizzi to circumvent this problem. In positing two clauses of the Wh Criterion Rizzi is in effect postulating that spec-head matching in wh-features is required independently by both wh-heads and wh-phrases. This entails that when the head of an unselected clause is -wh but the sentence contains a wh-phrase, Wh Movement will still be required at some level, as has usually been assumed. Rizzi argues that when this situation arises in French, the wh-phrase may move overtly to [Spec,CP] then, by a process of 'dynamic agreement' the empty C position will come to agree with the wh-phrase and (24a) will be satisfied. In this case, since no wh-feature has been forced to

9 It is obligatory in embedded questions.

move from I to C, no inversion will take place and Rizzi thus explains factor (ii) which accounts for the possibility of uninverted questions like (28) in French.

(28) Comment tu l'as su?
how you it have known
'How did you know that?'

Rizzi (1991) argues that English lacks Dynamic Agreement. Since, on his view, a question with no wh-head would only be able to satisfy (24) if Dynamic Agreement were available, the postulation that it exists in French but not English will account both for the fact that all questions involve both overt movement and inversion in English.

Now, Rizzi (1991) assumes that both clauses of the Wh Criterion (24) must apply at the same level in a given language, thus incidentally explaining factor (iv), i.e. why clause (b) cannot be satisfied simply by the operation of inversion, with subsequent movement of the wh-phrase left until LF. However, if the presence of a wh-phrase is itself sufficient to cause movement, as clause (a) of (24) suggests, then the possibility that no +wh head will be generated in a given matrix context ought not to be sufficient to predict the possibility of *in situ* questions in French. In Rizzi (1991) the explanation for the fact that some wh-phrases can remain *in situ* until LF is maintained by the additional assumption that these do not have the status of 'operators' until that level and, as a result, clause (a) does not apply to them until then. [10]

Overall then, Rizzi's (1991) approach manages to account for all the factors in (i) to (iv) above but under current economy considerations the approach faces a problem. If wh-phrases are not deemed to be

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10 An alternative explanation of this option which Rizzi considers and rejects is that clause (a) of (24) not apply until LF in French. Although indirect questions (and relative clauses) involve no inversion, clause (b) is sufficient to ensure obligatory movement in them. Late application of clause (a) would have the desired effect then of correctly predicting not only the possibility of *in situ* questions but also giving an account of factor (iii), why in multiple wh-questions in French as in English only one wh-phrase may move in the syntax.

operators until LF, an assumption required for English where factor (iii) also holds, why should they (be able to) move in the syntax in cases like (28) in French? Economy predicts that even if Dynamic Agreement were available it should only ever be invoked at LF.

Under Minimalism (Chomsky 1993, 1995), pure optionality of movement is ruled out. Movement of an element in the syntax is licit only if a failure of such movement would result in a derivation which could not converge. With a view to explaining the French data within the current approach while retaining as much of the explanatory power of Rizzi's approach as possible I would like now to propose some revisions.

Let us assume as before that wh-features are generated freely in unselected environments. If none of the clausal heads have been generated with wh-features but a sentence contains a wh-phrase, then that phrase will be **required** to stay *in situ*. However, semantic requirements will mean that unless the scope of the wh-phrase can be determined in some other way the sentence will be uninterpretable. Leaving aside details, let us assume that languages which allow *in situ* wh-phrases have access to such a mechanism while languages like English do not. On such a view, visible movement entails the presence of wh-features on some clausal head while lack of movement entails the absence of such features. If this is correct then an alternative explanation for uninverted structures like (28) must be sought. Consider for a moment what form such structures take in the varieties of French in which the Doubly Filled Comp Filter (DFCF) (Chomsky and Lasnik 1977) is not in effect.

(29) Comment que tu l'as su?
how that you it have known
'How did you know that?'

One might claim that the C here is -wh and invoke something like Dynamic Agreement in such structures, but given that it will be necessary to assume that in these dialects C can be freely generated in root contexts, it is much more straightforward to assume that when C is the head of the clause, that is the head that any wh-features will appear on. If Dynamic Agreement is not involved in (29), some head

bears wh-features or the Wh Criterion could not be satisfied; it must be C or an *ad hoc* mechanism will be required to explain the grammaticality. Now suppose that with respect to Wh Questions, dialects such as Metropolitan Standard French (MSF) and Québécois differ only in their application of the DFCF. If wh-features can be generated on C in root clauses in French,[11] the operation of the DFCF in some dialects will explain the absence of an overt complementiser in cases like (28) but the presence of a non-overt +wh complementiser there will obviate the need for inversion and its absence will thus be explained. It would be superfluous to assume that the dialects differ further by invoking Dynamic Agreement for cases such as (28). Since in MSF movement with inversion is also possible we need only claim that the projection of C is optional in French root clauses. This claim is independently supported by the following well known contrast seen in example (7) in which either inversion or an overt complementiser is possible after certain sentential adverbs in MSF, but not both.

(30) Peut-être est-il parti.
perhaps is he left
'Perhaps he left.'

(31) Peut-être qu'il est parti.
perhaps that he is left

(32) * Peut-être qu'est-il parti.
perhaps that he is left

If this approach is correct and Dynamic Agreement can be dispensed with in the explanation of structures like (28) then what accounts for the absence of uninverted questions in English? The simplest account must be correct here: complementisers cannot be generated in matrix contexts in English.

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11 We must ensure that the DCFC operates only in wh-contexts in which the C projection is filled with a complementiser and not when it is filled with a verb, i.e. when the C position is filled at D-structure.

Having dispensed with the need for Dynamic Agreement in non-inversion structures the question now arises of whether it is needed at all. Under standard GB assumptions, in multiple questions where one wh-phrase has moved in the syntax, movement of any remaining wh-phrases involves absorption (Higginbotham and May 1981), clause (a) of (24) or its equivalent presumably being responsible for the movement. Suppose however, that LF movement of an *in situ* wh-phrase is required merely because of the need for scope assignment rather than because of an independent spec-head requirement on wh-phrases as such. Since the presence of the word 'operator' in (24a) is crucial to an adequate description of the data it is unclear that this clause can be in operation for anything other than semantic reasons. If this is the only motivation for the postulation of clause (a) and its effect can be guaranteed by independent requirements, then it should be dispensed with, leaving a single-pronged Wh Criterion. Such a version of the criterion would be much more in keeping with Chomsky's recent proposals concerning the operation of Checking Theory (Chomsky 1995). Suppose then that there is no clause (a) to the Wh Criterion and that *in situ* wh-phrases may be assigned scope by some means other than movement and absorption at LF. If this approach is correct then there will be no need to invoke Dynamic Agreement at LF and it can thus be dispensed with completely.[12]

Before proceeding, let us look briefly at whether the proposed revisions to Rizzi's approach explain factor (v), the lack of partial Wh Movement in French and English and continue to allow us to explain factor (iv), why we never find inversion without concomitant Wh Movement.

Under the monoclausal approach to the Wh Criterion there is a one-to-one correspondence between the presence of a wh clausal head and the application of overt Wh Movement. Once the head of an IP or CP has +wh-features, the revision of (24b)/(25) in (33) will kick in.

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12 The question of what precisely happens to unmoved wh-phrases at LF is left open here. In Baker (1970) and indeed in much recent work (Aoun and Li 1993, Kiss 1993, Stroik 1995, Williams 1986) LF movement is not invoked to explain the assignment of scope to *in situ* wh-elements.

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(33) **Wh Criterion** (revised)
Heads marked +wh bear a strong (alternatively weak) (Categorial) X feature[13]

Since strong features must be eliminated by Spell-out (S-structure), it follows that partial movement should never be licit in a language in which the categorial feature on a wh-head is strong.[14] Under a checking view of the Wh Criterion it follows too that inversion could never take place without concomitant Wh Movement. Factors (iv) and (v) then fall out quite neatly within this framework.

Before proceeding to the next section in which we consider factor (vi) let us briefly summarise the assumptions entailed in the revised approach to Wh Movement taken here.

In unselected contexts wh-features are freely generated on a clausal head. Some languages limit the choice of clausal head in root contexts (English) while others allow a choice between the projection of an inflectional head only or a complementiser (French). Where a choice is available, wh-features may freely appear on the topmost head; where this is a head such as C which unlike I does not independently require its spec to be filled, uninverted questions will be possible. These may be of two types: those like spoken MSF in which the DFCF operates and those like Québécois in which it does not. (Visible) Wh Movement is triggered solely by the presence of a strong categorial feature on any wh-marked head, which in French may be either I or C. There is an isomorphic relation between the presence of a clausal head marked +wh and Wh Movement. In some languages assignment of scope to a wh-phrase at LF is limited to contexts in which a wh-phrase has already moved in the syntax, so that in these languages all derivations of questions in which no clausal heads are marked +wh will crash; English is such a language while French is not. Note that it is with respect to the presence or absence of this mechanism that English and French are postulated to differ rather than with respect to Dynamic Agreement.

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13 Where an X feature is similar to a D-feature as in Chomsky (1995) but where clearly the particular category of the element is unimportant.

14 How languages such as those described in McDaniel (1989) should be treated is as yet unclear to me.

The proposed revisions are necessary to a complete explanation for the behaviour of 'what' questions in French to which we now return.

3.2 *Que* questions

We begin our re-examination of *que* questions by looking at the reasons for the obligatory inversion which it induces, we then move on to look at the clitic-like nature of *que*.

3.2.1 Obligatory inversion in *que* questions

Let us look again at factor (vi), why 'what' questions always induce inversion in French. Rizzi (1991) did not attempt to deal with this matter, but within both his framework and our revisions of it inversion occurs only where an inflectional head bears +wh-features; we may thus see this restriction as one which rules out derivations in which wh-features are generated on C.[15] As can be seen from the examples in the previous sub-section, when matrix C occurs overtly in French it has the same form as the complementiser which introduces finite embedded clauses, *que* (or *qui* when subject extraction has taken place). We may say then that when the complementiser *que* bears wh-features, movement of the weak form *que* causes the derivation to crash.[16] One might posit a fairly superficial reason why *que* questions are licit only when I bears wh-features such as a filter blocking *que* in the spec of a *que* Comp. The restriction is in fact more likely to have something to do with the clitic-like properties of the question-word *que*, however. One reason is that such a filter would be likely to have a phonological basis and yet in this case we would have to say that it operates even in MSF where the DFCF means that the second of two adjacent *que*s is not even pronounced. The second reason is that a similar situation in which *qui* occupies both the head and spec of CP results in no ungrammaticality in the dialects in which DFCF does not operate.[17]

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15 Absence of wh-features is still licit since *quoi* may remain *in situ*.

16 Note that even in Québécois where there is a clear preference for situating wh-features on C rather than I, when *que* is used inversion must occur.

17 The complementiser *qui* is not only possible here but according to Lefebvre (1982) it is obligatory for reasons having to do with the ECP.

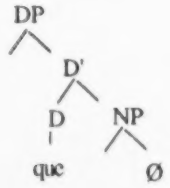
(34) Qui qui est venu?
who that is come
'Who came?'

Since *qui* does not have clitic-like properties this contrast is to be expected if we attribute the restriction to the clitic nature of *que*.[18] Let us explore further the clitic-like nature of the wh-word *que*.

3.2.2 *Que* as a defective clitic

We saw in Section 1 that there are sound morphological and syntactic reasons for regarding *que* as a weak form of the pronoun *quoi*. We may take pronouns to be determiners which head a projection containing a zero nominal head as in (29), and if 'what' in French is a pronoun then we will expect it to sometimes behave as a full phrasal projection (i.e. DP) and sometimes as a head (D).

(35)



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18 Further support can be found from the fact that in some dialects of Canadian French the non-clitic form *quoi* may appear in a fronted position, as in (i).

(i) Quoi c'est que Jean fait?
what it is that Jean does
'What is Jean doing?'

Indeed, a few speakers seem to even accept cases like (ii) though Lefebvre (1982) claims that the majority of her informants rejected such cases.

(ii)(*)Quoi tu fais?
what you do
'What are you doing?'

However, I have no explanation for why it is possible to move the strong form alone in these dialects but not in the MSF example in (iii).

(iii)*Quoi fait Jean?
what does Jean
'What is Jean doing?'

A most natural corollary of this view would be to treat *que* as the form which is used when head movement has taken place and *quoi* as the full DP form. This is the view espoused in Plunkett (1994) and it could clearly account not only for the dependent status of *que* but also for the fact that it cliticises only to verbs rather than whatever it happens to be adjacent to. However, adopting this view is not straightforward; weak object pronouns in French are standardly treated as syntactic clitics and since Kayne (1975) clitic placement has been largely regarded as involving movement of a head.[19]

Hirschbühler (1978), advocating a pronominal treatment of interrogative *que*, already argued that it was a clitic, thus accounting for its appearance adjacent to a verb.[20] However, the rules which he invoked to account for its status as a 'dependant' were phonological. While the distribution of *que*, as described by Hirschbühler, clearly shows that it is a phonological clitic on the verb, its status as a syntactic clitic and hence as a head which has undergone head movement is less certain. In particular, as already noted by Friedemann (1991), the fact that *que* can occur in long-distance questions where it has been extracted out of a tensed clause casts strong doubt on the possibility that it reaches the head of the matrix clause by Head Movement, especially since such Long Head Movement is otherwise unknown in French.

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19 In more recent approaches movement of a clitic is claimed to take place in two steps, the first, movement of a maximal projection to the specifier of an agreement phrase to get case and the second a further movement of the head to the clitic position. This is the approach I believe to be correct; however, some researchers (eg. Sportiche 1994), base generate clitics in a fronted position.

20 Aside from the cases mentioned in an earlier footnote, the only exceptions to the requirement that *que* be left-adjacent to a verb involve instances of *que diable* ('what the devil') which is not as restricted in its occurrence as simple cases of *que*. Like *que* this cannot occur next to a subject pronoun.

(i) * Que diable tu cherches?
what devil you look for
'What the hell are you looking for?'

Hirschbühler (1978) points out that all wh-*diable* phrases induce simple inversion.

Suppose we treat *que* as a phonological clitic but not a syntactic one. In this case we could assume that Wh Movement of 'what' in French involves movement of the whole DP until the target position has been reached. At that point the head could pro-cliticise to the adjacent verb or other clitic, where inversion has taken place. This would explain why *que* consistently appears outside all other clitics, including *ne*. It would also enable us to account for the fact that unlike other clitics *que* need not attach to the verb of its own clause, as in (12) and (21) repeated in (36).

(36) a. Que crains-tu qui soit advenu?
what fear you that is taken place
'What do you fear has happened?'

b. Que prétendais-tu qui motivait cette analyse?
what claimed you that motivated that analysis
'What did you claim motivated that analysis?'

(37) Que ne faudrait-il jamais faire t?
what NE ought-it never to do
'What ought one never to do?'

This solution does not require that we invoke Long Head Movement. However, the problem remains of how to account for why it always cliticises to a verb group and never anything else and in particular, why it cannot cliticise to a complementiser. In fact, under the view presented here it is this last case which it is essential to rule out since uninverted questions are posited to contain a non-overt complementiser adjacent to the wh-phrase. Clearly, it will be necessary to assume that phonological clitics like *que* may cliticise only to heads which are structurally adjacent and that these must have phonological content. I would like to propose that what is at stake in the **que que* sequence is that the complementiser does not itself have enough

phonological weight to act as a host for a phonological clitic while a verb, plus or minus verbal clitics does.[21]

Assuming that *que* questions in which the matrix C bears wh-features can be ruled out in this way, let us turn now to the remaining problematic cases in which *que* functions as a subject.

3.2.3 *Que* and subject questions

Let us return finally to the restriction on matrix clauses with 'what' subjects in French. As we saw earlier, these appear to be both banned from staying *in situ*, in the [Spec,IP], taking the form *quoi* and from moving to [Spec,CP] and taking the form *que*. Let us now see how this can be explained. To begin, let us review some of the problematic cases:

(38) a. * Que/quoi a été décidé?
what has been decided
'What was decided?'
b. * Que/quoi flotte dans l'eau?
what floats in the water
'What floats in water?'

Simple matrix questions are ungrammatical when the subject is a form of 'what', both when the subject is left *in situ* and when it is moved. However, the echo version of the *in situ* question is acceptable, as we saw in (15), repeated here as (39).

(39) a. QUOI a été décidé?
what has been decided
'WHAT was decided?'
b. QUOI flotte dans l'eau?
what floats in the water
'WHAT floats in water?'

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21 Although complement clitics are themselves phonologically light they form a phonological phrase with the following verb. However, phonological weight might also be relevant in accounting for the fact that many speakers find *que* questions where the first clitic is *ne* to be odd.

The impossibility of (38) cannot be attributed to any thematic restriction on *que/quoi* as the thematic relations are the same in (38) as in (39) and presumably they are the same again in the relevant part of (17) repeated here as (40).

(40) Il a été décidé quoi pour demain?
it has been decided what for tomorrow
'What has been decided for tomorrow?'

Note that here the wh-phrase does not occupy the subject position, which is filled instead by an expletive. In addition, we cannot maintain that *que/quoi* simply cannot be a subject because in elliptical questions with no verb *quoi* can clearly refer to the subject as (41) (from Léard 1982) shows.

(41) a. Quelque chose me chagrine.
something me upsets
'Something is upsetting me.'
b. Quoi donc?
what then
'What?

In addition, we have just seen cases in (36) where *que* has been extracted from the subject position in a lower clause. The acceptable periphrastic forms such as the one in (11) repeated here as (42) were taken to fall into this category too.

(42) Qu'est ce qui t flotte dans l'eau?
what is this that floats in the water
'What (is it that) floats/is floating in the water?'

Echo interpretations aside, the contrasts seem generally to show that *que/quoi* may occupy [Spec,IP] but not at S-structure and that *que* may occupy [Spec,CP] but not if it has been extracted from the subject position of the same clause. Let us dispense with the latter case first. Given that 'what' cannot be completely barred from the specifier

position of a tensed CP we need to explain why it is blocked from moving the short distance shown in (43).

(43) * $[_{CP}que_i[_{C'} V_j [_{IP} t_i\ t_j...]]]$

This configuration could perhaps be ruled out as an ECP violation which cannot be salvaged by Masquerade, as it can in the embedded clause in the relevant cases, since only IP has been projected. However it is not clear why an inverted verb would not be able to govern the trace position as Rizzi assumes happens with the extraction of a 'who' subject in (44).

(44) Qui vient?
who comes
'Who is coming?

I would like to maintain, though, that the verb has nothing to salvage in (44) since *qui* is in [Spec,IP] and not [Spec,CP]. This is exactly what the Minimal Approach to Wh Movement (as in Plunkett 1993) would predict. Put into the framework presented here, economy considerations will block an I marked +wh from moving to C in this situation since the wh-phrase in its specifier satisfies the revised Wh Criterion in (33) and further movement, being completely unmotivated, is blocked.[22] If movement is blocked in (44) then the same applies in (38), economy thus rules out the representation in (43). It is interesting to compare (18) and (19) repeated here as (45) and (46) in this regard.

(45) Qu'est-il arrivé?
what is it happened
'What happened?'

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22 Under Minimalism, movement is permitted only to satisfy morphological requirements and never in order to salvage ungrammaticality.

(46) Qu'a-t-il été décidé pour demain?
what has it been decided for tomorrow
'What has been decided for tomorrow?'

In cases such as these *que* is in fact an underlying object and at S-structure [Spec,IP] is filled by an expletive. In this situation of course economy will not block further movement because the only way to satisfy the Wh Criterion (33) will be for I to move to C and for the wh-phrase to move into [Spec,CP].

Let us concentrate then on explaining the remaining problem, the ban on (non-echo) *quoi*. when *in situ*. I would like to attribute this to the status of *que/quoi* as a non-specific indefinite.[23] Not all of the ungrammatical examples with *quoi* subjects have grammatical equivalents with expletive subjects but it is significant that in the examples usually cited *quoi* is the surface subject of a predicate with a single argument, plausibly an unaccusative,[24] or of a passive predicate. In fact, when we look at a different type of predicate speakers will sometimes, at least marginally, accept *que* subjects. The following have been found acceptable by more than one speaker.

(47) ? Que démontrait le redressement de l'économie?[25]
what demonstrated the re-establishment of the economy
'What demonstrated the recovery of the economy?'

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23 My thanks go to David Adger for first suggesting to me that the contrast I discuss below might have something to do with specificity.

24 Though neither *sentir* 'feel' nor *traîner* 'lie around' take the auxiliary *être* on the relevant interpretation.

25 For both this and the example which follows an object interpretation for the question is also available. I have controlled for this in asking speakers' judgements by putting them into a context which forces the subject reading as in (i).

(i) A ton avis, que révèle le mieux [le redressement de
in your opinion, what reveals the best the re-establishment of
l'économie], les chiffres de chômage ou le taux de l'inflation?
the economy the figures of unemployment or the rate of the inflation
'In your view what best reveals the economic recovery, the unemployment figures or the rate of inflation?'

(48) ? Que vous demanderait un voeu de célibat
what you would ask a vow of celibacy
'What would require a vow of celibacy from you?'

(49) ? Que réclame toute notre attention?
what demands all our attention
'What demands our full attention?'

What seems particularly relevant here is that in all these cases, on a subject interpretation,[26] 'what' seems to mean something like 'what particular thing'. In other words, *que* is being interpreted here as 'D-linked' to use the terminology of Pesetsky (1987), or if Kiss (1993) is right in equating the two, a specific or familiar indefinite. It is well known that many languages bar indefinites from occurring in the [Spec,IP] position, or require that they receive a particular type of interpretation either as a specific or a generic. In some languages (Modern Standard Arabic is one), the addition of a modifier may be sufficient to render the indefinite specific enough to be able to occupy this position. Clearly, some indefinites may appear in subject position in French but it may be that *que/quoi* are so resistant to a specific interpretation that, except where no other interpretation is available, as in an echo, it is rejected in [Spec,IP]. This ideas seems to be borne out by the contrast mentioned to me by Paul Hirschbühler (p.c.) between the multiple interrogation in (50) and the more complex one in (14) repeated here as (51).

(50) ?? Quoi trainait où?
what lay around where?
'What was lying around where?'

---

26 (47) and (48) are open to object interpretations too; perhaps the fact that the object interpretation is more prominent in (i) than in (47) accounts for the fact that fewer speakers accepted it.

(i) Que démontre que l'économie se redresse?
what shows that the economy is re-establishing itself
'What shows that the economy is recovering?'

(51) ? Qui a dit que quoi trainait où?
who has said that what lay around where
'Who said that what was lying around where?'[27]

In (51) the context provides strongly for an interpretation in which the answer(s) to 'what' must be selected from a previously delimited set, much as is the case with 'which X' in English, which has been claimed to be associated with a necessarily D-linked interpretation. Of course, to determine whether this explanation is really on the right track much more detailed informant work would be required. However, the fact that many speakers will accept *quoi* as a subject on an echo interpretation is further suggestive of this view, since these are clearly specific. In addition, the fact that long-distance questions where *que* can escape [Spec,IP] are possible lends strong support to this view. Further, questions with an expletive subject, where *que* does not need to transit through [Spec,IP], are correctly predicted to be good under the Minimal Approach since when [Spec,IP] is filled by a non-wh-element, just as in object or adjunct questions the Wh Criterion cannot be satisfied without subsequent movement.[28]

Finally, whether it is ultimately correct to regard periphrastic questions like (52) as genuinely long-distance or not, they clearly differ from simple questions in their propositional force, which in many cases is a diagnostic of specificity. Thus in both English and French, (52) but not (53) presupposes that something did indeed happen.

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27 The ambiguity which appears in the English gloss if the complementiser is omitted here is not a factor in the French where embedded finite complementisers may be omitted only in interrogative clauses. The alternative interpretation of the English gloss would have to be rendered as in (i).

(i) Qui a dit ce qui trainait où?
who has said it that lay around where
'Who said what was lying around where?'

28 These questions do suggest, however, that seeing strong features as categorial requirements only cannot be quite right. If it were, one would wonder why an expletive could not satisfy the requirement. This leads us back to a more traditional approach in which the element to be checked against the strong feature must bear compatible wh-features.

(52) Qu'est ce qui s'est passé?
what is it that is happened
'What was it that happened?'

(53) Que s'est-il passé
what is-it happened
'What happened?'

There remains work to be done on fleshing out the idea presented here but I am aware of only one problem with it. Pesetsky (1987) claims that elements like 'what the hell' are strongly non-D-linked. However, some speakers have been found to accept the following.

(54) Que diable te faisait imaginer que je serais chez moi à
what devil you made imagine that I would be house-my at
cette heure-là?
that hour-there
'What on earth made you think I'd be home at that time of day?'

I leave the resolution of this problem to further research.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have seen that French questions possess a number of peculiarities which have major implications for our understanding of Wh Movement and how it is to be motivated within current syntactic theory. I have proposed a number of revisions to Rizzi's approach to questions to bring it into line with current thinking arguing in line with Chomsky (forthcoming) that checking is a one-way mechanism, at least with respect to wh-features. I have argued that the revisions proposed to Rizzi's theory help us to explain in part the restrictions on *que* questions which have been so widely discussed in the literature on French syntax. These revisions alone do not suffice, however; there is a further constraint on the position of *que* which I have proposed is a strongly non-specific indefinite barred from terminating in [Spec,IP]. The impossibility of *quoi* subject questions is thus accounted for without a requirement that subject question-words move and is perfectly compatible with a *Minimal Approach* to Wh Movement, *contra* Rizzi

(1991). The impossibility of *que* subject questions, on the other hand is attributed to economy considerations but their equivalents with expletive subjects are correctly predicted to be possible. Rather than invalidating the Minimal Approach then, French 'what' questions actually lend support to it.

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